

"So I'm about to say something really... Hmm... Weird," Joe said as he leaned against the building, arms crossed.

"Is that supposed to be news to me?" Cleo asked, rifling through her bag and pulling out two apples. She passed one to Joe, and he took it.

"If it were, I don't think we'd be friends."

"I figured."

"Anyway it's a little weirder than normal."

"I'll be the judge of that, I think."

Joe shrugged, took a bite of his apple and said, "So, one of the arguments against a benevolent God -- don't look at me like that I told you it was weird -- anyway, so, if God was so nice, would he have put a bomb in the Garden of Eden?"

Cleo blinked at Joe for a long moment.

"Sorry, I'll back up a little," Joe smiled apologetically. "How much do you know about human theology?"

"I've been human before Joe," Cleo glowered, pulling a knife from her pocket and cutting a small piece away from her apple. "That's just a really strong lead."

Joe shrugged. "Did you expect anything different?"

"No, it's just a little early for theology today."

"We can talk about something else, if you want."

A shout interrupted their conversation. Grian sprinted past, laughing maniacally and apologizing in the same breaths. Doc followed quickly after him, shouting curses and insults.

Joe and Cleo both took contemplative bites of their apples and watched the two run.

"No, I want to see where this conversation is going," Cleo said finally, slicing another piece of her apple off.

"Okay, so, some people believe God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and also, all-benevolent,"

Joe continued, twisting his apple stem with every adjective. "But if He were all of those things, why would He make a bunch of curious humans, tell them they could touch everything except one specific big red button, and, knowing they would definitely press it, just sit back and watch?"

"I wasn't aware buttons and bombs existed at the same time as the Garden of Eden."

"One could argue the whole Sodom and Gammorah thing was bomb-like."

"That was definitely, definitely meteors, Joe."

"Also the bomb thing is an analogy, and you know it's an analogy."

"What are we analogy-ing?" Mumbo asked, flaring his elytra as he landed beside them.

Cleo pulled a third apple from her bag and passed it to him, "Pretty sure Joe is comparing you to God."

Mumbo took the apple, looking incredulous. He gave a laugh that was half nervous, half confused. "I-- well that's-- that's very flattering Joe. I didn't realize you thought so highly of me."

"You would think that," Cleo smirked, slicing off another piece of apple.

"What?"

"So the question stands," Joe continued as though neither of the interruptions took place. "If God is good, why did he put a big red button in the Garden of Eden?"

Mumbo opened his mouth, and then deciding he had no idea what this conversation was about, actually, he closed it again.

"Maybe God was feeling optimistic that day," Cleo offered. "Or maybe even gods need to screw around and find out sometimes. For instance, I know this apple is definitely going to rot in me later, but I'm also definitely still eating it."

"Fair point," Joe said, twisting off his apple stem and flicking it to the ground. "So maybe God can make mistakes, or He was curious, or there was something ineffable going on at the time. But if God did it

twice," Joe gave Mumbo a sideways glance, "would that be screwed up or what?"

Mumbo opened his mouth again, closed it, opened it again.

"Mumbo a fly is going to buzz in there if you aren't careful," Cleo said.

"Okay, okay. I can see where -- okay. So, first off, I'm not God," Mumbo said, and then paused, because Scar was screaming and running past them now, followed shortly by Grian, who was followed shortly by Doc. Then he continued, "Also this isn't Eden."

"It's an analogy," Joe reminded him unhelpfully, smiling warmly.

"Also how was I supposed to know this would happen again?"

"That Grian would push a button, or that Grian would push a button specifically to mess with Doc?" Cleo asked innocently.

Mumbo opened and closed his mouth again eloquently.

"You've gotta admit, at this point it is starting to look intentional," Joe pointed out.

"What's starting to look intentional?" Jevin interrupted, landing amidst the group standing on the fringes of the shopping district. Cleo offered him another apple.

"A malevolent God," Joe answered.

"My button," Mumbo grumbled at the same time.

"The hubris of man," Cleo added, because it seemed relevant.

"I HAVE BEEN STANDING HERE FOR THIRTY-SIX HOURS GRIAN. THIRTY-SIX."

Doc screamed, passing so close to the four onlookers in his chase, they could no longer talk over his yelling. "I WANT THAT CROWN IT BELONGS TO ME."

Grian slid across the grass, narrowly dodging Doc's thrown axe. He threw the gaudy purple crown he'd stolen to Scar, who sprinted off in another direction with it. Doc roared angrily, "I LET YOU TOO OFF EASY LAST TIME BUT NO MORE! I WILL RAIN TNT AND FIRE

ON YOUR BASES! I WILL TEAR THEM APART BLOCK BY BLOCK I

WILL--!"

"I'm sorry Doc!" Grian cackled, not sounding sorry at all, "It's just -- you're so fun to mess with!"

He and Scar spread their elytras and leaped into the sky, followed shortly by Doc, who was still shouting.

Jevin, Cleo and Joe all turned to look at Mumbo, who rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly.

"Okay so... Maybe it's possible, yes, I could have foreseen this happening," Mumbo said begrudgingly. "But I mean, it's not all *that* bad, is it?"

"We do have a lot of fun fighting wars," Jevin agreed, shoving his entire apple into his face.

It hovered blue-tinted in his opaque slime for a moment before rapidly dissolving.

"You would, Jevin," Cleo smiled.

"Sleep with one eye open, Cleo," Jevin replied conversationally.

"Some of our best mini games came out of the Mycelium War," Joe observed, taking one more bite out of his apple.

Mumbo looked down at his apple contemplatively.

"So the question still stands," Cleo said, after a long pause had passed between them, "is Mumbo evil for inflicting The Button Game on us the first time, or the second time?"

Joe shrugged, "I think like all religion, the answer is subjective. Doc would argue yes. Grian would argue no."

"That wasn't a yes-or-no question," Jevin said.

"I would argue I'm *still not God*, so this is a terrible analogy, actually!" Mumbo shouted defensively, and then took a bite of his apple, closing the subject.

#the barking writer #hermitcraft #joe hills #zombiecleo #ijevin
#mumbo jumbo #docm77 #grian #goodtimeswithscar #the button

game #theology #kiiiiind of #anyway this popped into my head this morning like a fever dream lol

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